

SLIDE DESCRIPTIONS

These slides are of works by Katsushika Hokusai and Utagawa Hiroshige, from the James A. Michener Collection at the Honolulu Academy of Arts. Before viewing the slides, teachers are recommended to review the following facts with students:

The Edo Period

- Edo period Japan was ruled by a shogun. Edo (modern-day Tokyo) was the administrative capital of his feudal government, called the shogunate.
- Samurai were required to live certain amounts of time in Edo each year. As a result, Edo developed into a sprawling metropolis, with a need for products, crafts, services, and food to support the samurai.
- There were four hereditary classes in society: samurai, farmers, craftsmen, and merchants.
- Although the samurai were the top social class, many merchants were wealthier. Merchants became wealthy as Japan shifted from a rural, agrarian economy to an urban, consumer culture.
- Edo had a literate, wealthy, sophisticated population, interested in popular culture, nature, travel, pilgrimage, and literature.

Traditional Woodblock Prints

- The term *ukiyo-e* (literally “floating world pictures”) refers to woodblock prints of the fleeting, ephemeral world of the entertainment district in Edo (actors, entertainers, Kabuki theater). *Ukiyo-e* prints also showed the everyday life of the common people.
- *Ukiyo-e* prints were commissioned by publishers, who hired artists to design the prints. Designs were then carved into woodblocks by a carver and given to a printer. Prints were mass-produced and sold very cheaply.
- In these slides, students will see the works of two print designers, Hokusai and Hiroshige, who are famous for their landscape designs.

SLIDE 1

"Evening Scene in Saruwaka Street," (View 90)

Series: *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*

Hiroshige, approx. 1857

Acquisition #HAA 22784



During the Edo period, ukiyo-e showed the everyday lives of common people as well as famous entertainers and actors, landscapes, and famous places in Japan. These prints appeared in books, or were sold as single sheets or as part of a series.

What city do you think this *ukiyo-e* depicts?

This is a scene of Edo, the capital of Japan between 1603 and 1868. In the early 1700s, Edo was the largest city in the world.

What activities are happening here?

This print is of Saruwaka Street, which was filled with Kabuki theaters and restaurants. Watching Kabuki theater was a favorite pastime of the commoner during the Edo period. Plays were typically based on historical events, legends, or tragic love stories. In this picture, the theaters distinguished by boxed turrets on the roofs of the buildings above the entrances show they are government-approved theaters. Restaurants line the street on the other side, where waitresses attend to customers.

How would you describe the people of Edo?

Many Edo citizens were merchants, who made their money by providing goods and services to the upper classes of samurai who lived in the city year-round. Outdoor activities and artistic cultivation were very important to Edo citizens. Women and men of all classes tried to practice calligraphy, poetry writing, music, and painting. They also loved different types of literature and novels, many of which contained *ukiyo-e* illustrations.

Ukiyo-e prints were very popular, and were collected as travel souvenirs or posters.

How is a sense of distance created in this print?

The artist Hiroshige uses a Western linear perspective to create distance. In this technique, the artist chooses a single point (in this case the gate at the end of the street) towards which all lines in the picture recede or "vanish." Objects get smaller the further away they are. During the Edo period, Japanese artists experimented with drawing techniques that were different from the Japanese style. Hiroshige also uses the Western technique of shadowing in this design.

SLIDE 2

Street Scene in Mountain Village

Late 19th century photograph

Asian Art Museum Library Collection



This photograph shows a Japanese village from the late nineteenth century. Its buildings and narrow streets are very similar to those found in Edo during the 1800s.

How would you describe the buildings along this street?

They are made of wood and are two to three stories high. They are similar to the styles of architecture in Edo, although some Edo buildings were covered in plaster or stone.

How do you think the lower and upper levels of the buildings were used?

The bottom levels of many of the buildings were used as stores, with living quarters above. You can see the store signs to the side of the entrances of each shop. In the front store on the left is a raised platform where a shopkeeper would conduct business with customers.

In Edo Japan, merchants were the lowest social class. Why?

The Japanese believed that merchants did not produce anything valuable for society. Rather, they bought and sold goods for the sole purpose of making money. As a result, in traditional Japan merchants were looked down upon by the upper classes.

Since Japan was ruled by a shogun, who do you think was at the top of the social ladder?

The samurai class ruled Japan, while the emperor remained a figurehead ruler in Kyoto. The samurai were the most privileged in society, and were able to control the farmers and their crops, to pass laws restricting the consumption of merchants, and to control all means of transportation in the country. Next in social status were farmers who produced rice for the samurai, then craftsmen who produced useful tools and artwork for society. At the bottom was the merchant class. Although merchants were not highly ranked, they nevertheless were some of the richest citizens.

Discussion

How did Edo Japan determine a person's value in society? Was there any social mobility? How was its value system different from that of your community?

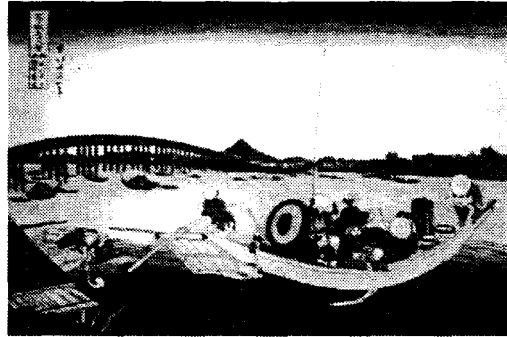
SLIDE 3

"Viewing Sunset over Ryogoku Bridge from the Ommaya Embankment"

Series: *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*

Hokusai, approx. 1830

Acquisition #HAA 21874



Edo had a large network of rivers and canals used to transport people and goods. This provided a convenient public transportation system for the city. Ferries carried all sorts of people, who could ride for a small fee. This print shows a scene from the Sumida River in Edo.

What are passengers doing in this boat?

Some people are chatting while a man sits at the tip of the boat, deep in contemplation or sleep. A man leans over the side of the boat to

wash his towel and other passengers shield themselves from the sun with umbrellas and hats. One man standing in the boat is a samurai (distinguished by the two swords at his hip), and gazes towards the Ryogoku Bridge.

To the left of this boat, a woman leans over a docked ferry to rinse her towel. In the distance, you can see Mount Fuji and the Ryogoku Bridge, one of the many bridges that spanned the city's canals and rivers.

Why do you think the government spent money building an extensive transportation system in Edo?

Edo was a huge metropolis, home to over one million people by the early 1700s. The city had grown out of the need for goods and services to support the huge samurai population that lived in the city all year round. A reliable transportation system, which included not only rivers and canals but also highways, was a necessary infrastructure.

People used the rivers not only for transportation and business, but also for pleasure. They enjoyed many outdoor activities, such as the festivals and fireworks displays that took place along the riverbanks. People would also charter pleasure boats to see the city at a leisurely pace, a popular way to spend a hot summer day.

SLIDE 4

"Fireworks at Ryogoku"

Series: *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*

Hiroshige, approx. 1857

Acquisition #HAA 22792



What do you see in this print by Hiroshige?

Here we see a fireworks display at the Ryogoku Bridge, which you saw in the previous slide. The fireworks are being set off to celebrate Kawabiraki, which was the most exciting summer event in Edo. Kawabiraki means "opening of the river," and originated as a ceremony in the eighteenth century to appease evil spirits that were causing plague and famine in Japan.

In this scene, people crowd the bridge, riverbanks, restaurants, and boats to watch the spectacular fireworks. The traditions of a summer festival and fireworks at Ryogoku Bridge continue in Tokyo to this day.

Can you see the grain of the woodblocks used to make this print?

You can see the woodgrain pattern in the sky, which adds texture and makes the sky more interesting.

Discussion

- Hokusai and Hiroshige's designs are often a hybrid of Western and traditional Japanese compositions and artistic techniques. They purposely chose elements of these styles for different purposes and effects. What might these styles be?

SLIDE 5

"Processional Standard-bearers at Nihon Bridge" (Station 1)

Series: *Fifty-three Stations of the Tokaido Road*

Hiroshige, approx. 1833

Acquisition #HAA 13636



Here we see townspeople of Edo Japan. Can you describe them?

In this picture, we see dancers (two pale women in the front), children, animals, flower vendors, fish sellers, and other merchants. Many of the sellers are carrying baskets balanced on a long pole, which was a common way of carrying goods to the market.

This print shows the Nihon Bridge area, one of the busiest commercial and transportation centers in Edo. Stores, storage buildings, fish markets, and houses were centered here.

What do you see approaching over the bridge?

You can see the beginning of a *daimyo* procession. *Daimyo* were the feudal landholders in the provinces with their troops. The procession is led by two men carrying garment boxes on poles. Behind them are two lance-carriers, with their lances ceremoniously wrapped in feathers.

Daimyo were required to travel to Edo every year from their province, in very elaborate processions. They would live in Edo for a few months to pay their respects to the shogun, then return home. Their wives and children, however, had to stay in Edo all the time, making them essentially hostages in the city. Maintaining homes in Edo and in their provinces drained the *daimyo*'s finances. This system of "alternate attendance" made them too poor to rebel against the government, as well as endangered their families living in Edo.

How has the artist Hiroshige drawn the people's faces? How do you think he feels about the common person?

Hiroshige has drawn people's faces with great detail and humor. Each has a lively expression for their different moods and personalities. Although Hiroshige was part of the samurai class, he was sympathetic to commoners and interested in documenting their daily activities and lifestyles.

Do you think this print was made from one woodblock or several?

This print has the full range of printed colors (called a *nishiki-e* or "brocade print"), and was made using at least ten individual impressions. A keyblock was cut for the outlines of the figures, then one block could have been cut for each separate color (although a single block was often used to print several colors to conserve wood). Often colors were applied in layers to deepen their intensity.

Look at the patterns and details in the people's clothing. The outlines of the figures have varying line thicknesses, which make them look more interesting and lively. This fine line quality was dependent on the precise hand of the person who carved the woodblocks.

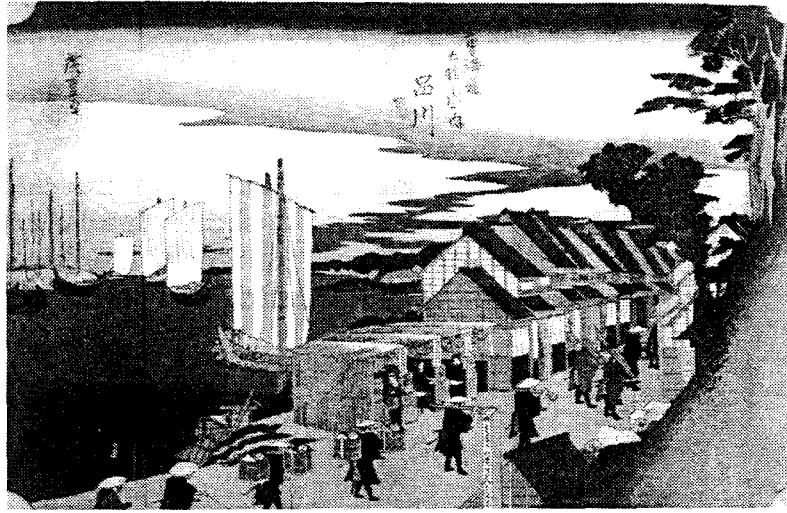
SLIDE 6

"Sunrise at Shinagawa" (Station 2)

Series: *Fifty-three Stations of the Tokaido Road*

Hiroshige, approx. 1833

Acquisition #HAA 17245



This print shows another *daimyo* procession. How are people reacting to the oncoming procession?

Although commoners were supposed to clear the way for *daimyo* and kneel on the ground as they passed, these villagers remain standing as they watch. This could reflect the breakdown in social hierarchy during the last years of the Edo period. The commoners in this print seem more curious about the passing spectacle than fearful of the *daimyo* as they would have been before.

What else do you see in this scene?

This print shows early morning at Shinagawa, as you can see in the rising sun on the horizon, amidst pink clouds and blue sky. Boats carrying cargo and goods can be seen in the harbor. The road is lined with teahouses and restaurants.

Why was it so important for the government to build good roads?

The Tokaido Road was part of a network of highways built by the government throughout the country to connect Edo with other major cities. The government built extensive roads and canals, because they required their *daimyo* to travel constantly to and from the capital. The roads were also used for commerce. People of all classes traveled, although commoners needed official permission to do so, such as for business or pilgrimage.

Think how modern-day travel is controlled, such as in airports, bus stations, bridges, tourist sites, train stations, etc. How might travel along the Tokaido Road have been controlled?

Before any Japanese citizen embarked on a trip, they had to have an official permit to do so. On the road, government post stations were set up to check travelers' permits before they could move from one province to another. Castles were also built at strategic points, to defend against attacking armies.

Discussion

Commoners during the Edo period often traveled for either business, or to make a pilgrimage to a famous shrine, temple, or historic site. Why do average people today travel? Is it mostly for business, pleasure, or for religious reasons? Do you need official permission to travel? When?

SLIDE 7

"Hodogaya on the Tokaido Road"

Series: *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*

Hokusai, approx. 1830

Acquisition #HAA 21959



What modes of travel do you see in this slide?

We see people traveling by palanquin, horseback, and on foot along a road in Hodogaya. People traveled differently, depending on their status and financial means. The upper classes often rode in palanquins, although it could be uncomfortable since the palanquin was small and could make for a bumpy ride. Thus some people, even the wealthier travelers, preferred to travel by foot, which allowed them to fully appreciate the nature around them. When travelers tired of walking, they could hire a horse and horseman at road stations. Because the geography of the Tokaido Road varied greatly, people switched between different modes of transportation regularly.

In this print, we see a traveling monk on the right. He is identifiable by his straw hat and bamboo flute. A traveler is riding a horse led by a groom, while two palanquin bearers carrying a woman set their heavy load down for a rest. One bearer reties his sandal, while the other mops his sweaty head.

What types of clothing are the people wearing?

As was typical of commoners during this time, the travelers in this picture wear simple blue cotton clothes, hats, and leggings. They wear straw sandals, which were flimsy and didn't last very long, especially on rough terrain. Sometimes, sandals would have to be replaced several times a day unless one wore more expensive leather shoes.

What mountain do you see in the background?

Past the rice fields, you can see the famous Mount Fuji. This active volcano (although it last erupted in 1707) is one of the most sacred places in Japan, and has long been the subject of Japanese literature, poetry, and paintings. People often made pilgrimages to Fuji to admire its beauty, size, and surrounding forests.

What does the line of trees do for the composition?

The arrangement of trees punctuates each of the figures, which adds to the rhythm of the procession. The trees also separate the foreground from the background.

Extension Activity

Imagine traveling the Tokaido on horseback, by foot, or in a palanquin. Since you cannot carry much, what things would be necessary for your trip? For what types of weather and road conditions would you have to prepare? How would you prevent being robbed or hurt? How would you carry your belongings? Write a short essay describing who you are, where you are going and why, how long your trip will be, and what types of things you will take.

SLIDE 8

"Yoshida on the Tokaido Road"

Series: *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*

Hokusai, approx. 1830

Acquisition #HAA 21960



This shows a roadstop in Yoshida, a famous castle town on the Tokaido Road. What kind of a business do you think it is?

This shows the lounge area of a teahouse, a place where travelers could enjoy a cup of tea, get a bite to eat, and rest for awhile. Tea shops also sold travel paraphernalia and souvenirs. They were often run by farmers who wanted to supplement their income. The sign above the raised platform reads "Fuji-viewing Tea House," advertising that this house serves tea and offers a good view of Mount Fuji. To the right of the entrance hang signs that advertise tea and local kindling-wood.

What kinds of activities are happening in this scene?

Two women sit on a raised platform. One gazes at Mount Fuji through the large open window, while the other orders tea from the waitress, whose serving tray rests on the platform. The waitress points to Fuji, possibly suggesting her customers enjoy the scenic view while they wait for their drinks.

To the right, two exhausted men rest on the platform. Their hats and walking sticks are propped against the seating area, while they puff slowly on pipes.

On the left, a palanquin which might belong to the two women, sits off to the side of the lobby. One of the bearers leans against the palanquin and mops his head with a towel. The other beats his straw sandals with a mallet, to make the straw softer and more comfortable to wear.

The seal of the publisher is cleverly shown in this print. Where do you think it might be?

The seal of the publisher, Eijudo, appears on the round hats of the travelers to the right. This was a clever way of identifying the publisher, which was required in every design, into the composition.

Discussion

This print was part of a famous series by Hokusai, entitled *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*. However, Fuji only appears in the distance and is not the focal point of this scene. What do you think Hokusai was most interested in portraying in the design of this print? Do you think Mount Fuji is secondary to the activities of the people, or is the mountain a part of their lives?

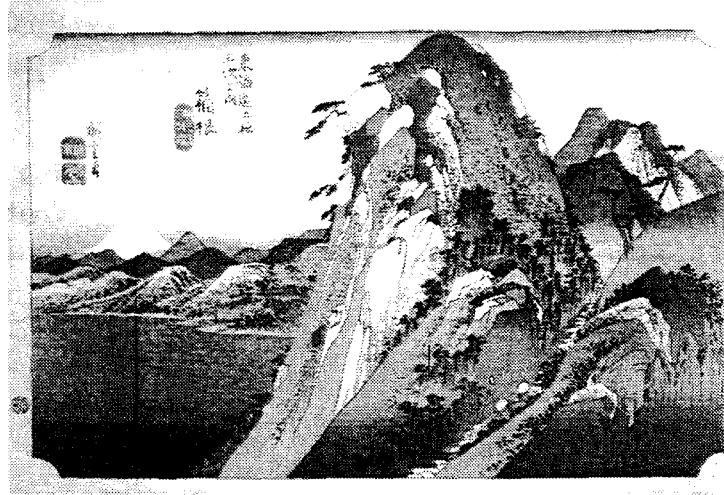
SLIDE 9

"The Lake at Hakone" (Station 11)

Series: *Fifty-three Stations of the Tokaido Road*

Hiroshige, approx. 1833

Acquisition #HAA 17434



Travel along the Tokaido could be very dangerous, as there were steep mountain ranges to pass. The area depicted in this print is the Hakone Pass, one of the most treacherous areas of the Tokaido. The craggy mountains overlooked beautiful Hakone Lake. You can see the hats of travelers as they slowly make their way along the steep path.

Notice the colors Hiroshige uses in rendering the cliffs. How many colors can you see? How many separate blocks did it take to make this *nishiki-e*?

In addition to the keyblock for outlines, there are at least six distinct colors used in the cliffs, plus black for the trees that dot the mountains. A typical *nishiki-e* involved at least ten separate impressions.

Look at the distant mountain ranges, and how their colors vary from gray, to brown, to blue, and then finally to the white Mount Fuji in the far distance. Does this look realistic to you?

Japanese artists often used flat planes of color to suggest a sense of form and volume. Bright colors were also used for this effect. Here, Hiroshige uses the multiple colors in the rock to suggest different angles and thicknesses in the rock, whereas Western artists might have used more dramatic lighting and different shadowing techniques to do so.

***Ukiyo-e* artists often exaggerated certain aspects of their designs to make a point. How does Hiroshige do this here?**

Hiroshige chose to emphasize the cliff in the foreground, which juts out and seems very imposing and solitary. It towers over the small travelers inching their way up the trail. The trees on the mountain seem to cling to

the rock and are precariously perched on its top and sides. In such a way, Hiroshige emphasizes the danger of the area, as well as its beauty.

Discussion

- How do painters, print designers, and photographers differ in their media? How can each use lighting, composition, colors, treatment of figures, etc. in different ways to make a particular statement about their subject matter? Why would they do this? Can you find examples in magazines, advertisements, books, newspapers, or television to illustrate your point?
- Imagine if fewer colors had been used in this print. How would the focus of the viewer have been different? What if only one color had been used? How would the picture look then? Would it still have the same effect?

SLIDE 10

"Driving Rain at Shono" (Station 46)

Series: *Fifty-three Stations of the Tokaido Road*

Hiroshige, approx. 1833

Acquisition #HAA 16619



This print is also from Hiroshige's series Fifty-three Stations of the Tokaido Road. We see a night rain scene at Shono, a rural station along the Tokaido. Two palanquin bearers and three villagers run for cover, while bamboo trees in the background sway violently in the storm. Two villagers shield themselves from the rain with grass raincoats.

How does Hiroshige depict the rainstorm?

Hiroshige was interested in changes in nature, weather, and seasons, and was a master at depicting weather with a subtle, delicate touch. In this print, the straight, diagonal lines of the rain, the slanting trees, and bent figures give you a sense of the rain's force. The diagonal lines of the rain also nicely counterbalance the slope of the hill and angles of the figures.

Think about the woodblock printing process. When would the printer have applied the rain?

The rain was probably a separate block altogether, and was applied last, on top of the figures and landscape.

How does Hiroshige make the figures of people stand out from the rain and landscape?

He delineates them very clearly with distinct outlines that show their bodies and details in clothing. In addition, Hiroshige uses bright colors of pink, blue, and green for the figures, to make them stand out even more against the gray background.

How would the woodblock printing process affect how artists delineated figures and landscapes in their designs?

In carved woodblocks, clear outlines had to be made in order to produce prints that were all similar in look and showed fine details. Western artists were influenced by how Japanese artists outlined their figures, instead of using shadows and shading to denote the thickness of objects. This influenced European poster designs in the late nineteenth century, such as those of Henri Toulouse-Lautrec. European artists were also interested in the everyday activities of people in Japanese prints, which were different from the formal poses used in Western paintings.

SLIDE 11

"Night Snow at Kambara" (Station 16)

Series: *Fifty-three Stations of the Tokaido Road*

Hiroshige, approx. 1833

Acquisition #HAA 15927



What is the mood of this winter scene?

The mood is very quiet and hushed. You can sense the silence of the night as travelers trudge slowly through the thick snow in a small village. The people walk laboriously, dragging their feet. The hills, trees, and rooftops are heavily blanketed by the continuously falling snow, which gently floats through the air. On the left, a man carries an umbrella to protect himself from the snow, while on the right a traveler wears a coat made of rice straw.

This print is often recognized as one of Hiroshige's masterpieces. How does Hiroshige create a subdued feeling? How does he communicate the chill of winter?

This print shows Hiroshige's mastery in expressing the different moods of the seasons and his delicate style. He uses very few colors to create a simple, austere setting and a feeling of loneliness. The hunched figures of the travelers give a sense of how cold the snow is and the hardship of their journey. The snow unifies the composition and softens the hard edges and steep angles of the landscape.

How did the printer create a soft look to this print?

This is a monotone print of black and white. The tonal gradations were made by carefully wiping color off the inked block in gradual degrees. The only sharp colors that stand out are the colors of the traveler's clothes and belongings. It took great skill on the part of the printer to create such delicate effects; the printer was as important for the success of woodblock prints as the artist creating the design.

Discussion

People have tried unsuccessfully to find the exact location that Hiroshige depicts here. This place in Kambara might not have existed. People also have noted that it seldom snows in Kambara. Why do you think Hiroshige interpreted Kambara in this way? Was he concerned with portraying it in a realistic way, or in communicating a certain mood about the village?

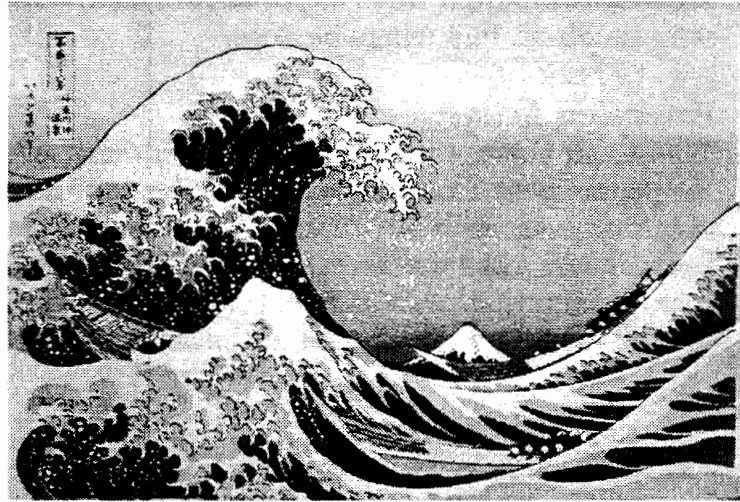
SLIDE 12

"Under the Wave off Kanagawa" (Great Wave)

Series: *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*

Hokusai, approx. 1830

Acquisition #HAA 13695



How does the mood of this print differ from the previous slide?

This print is very different from "Night Snow at Kambara" by Hiroshige. The artist of this print, Hokusai, was known for his dynamic compositions and exciting designs. Here, three boats are tossed by the wind and waves in an area off Japan's coast known for its typhoons. There is a feeling of turbulence and danger in the towering wave that threatens to engulf the small boats.

How does he depict people and their relationship to nature?

The boats barely manage to stay afloat in the waves. The crests of the waves look like human hands that are about to snatch the people from their boats. The people crouch inside, holding on tightly. In this print, Hokusai contrasts the power and beauty of a merciless sea with humans who must depend on it for their survival.

Hokusai uses a low horizon, as in Western art. However, he uses Japanese decorative techniques. What are these techniques?

As in much Japanese art, Hokusai creates a simple, asymmetrical composition with few elements: the sea, boats, and Mount Fuji. He also uses strong outlines to delineate shapes, and places objects in a very close foreground. This makes the viewer seem as if he or she is in front of the wave. Hokusai also uses a repetitive pattern (in this case, swirls) to suggest the movement of water.

This was one of Hokusai's most famous prints in his series *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*. How does he portray the mountain?

Although this title implies that Mount Fuji is the main subject of the series, the mountain often appears in the distant background or as a silhouette. Hokusai was as interested in the events and landscapes that happened around Fuji, as he was in Fuji itself. In the upcoming slides, look for Hokusai's different ways of portraying the mountain, and think about why he places Fuji where he does.

Extension Activity

Choose an object, building, natural landmark, or select a picture from a magazine, poster, or photograph. Using your imagination, redraw this object or place as many different ways as you can. What details, colors, or aspects will you emphasize, change, omit, minimize? How does each picture communicate a different image, feeling, or idea? What does each picture say about your intent as the artist?

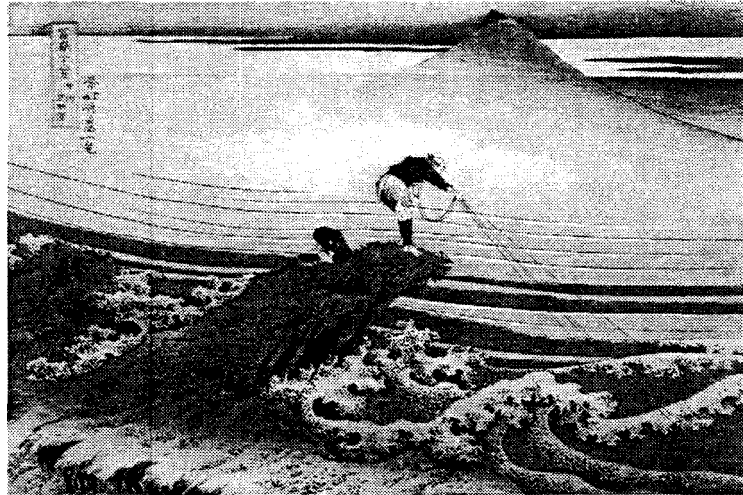
SLIDE 13

"Kajikazawa in Kai Province"

Series: *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*

Hokusai, approx. 1830

Acquisition #HAA 21974



How many major elements does this composition have? Describe this picture.

You can see four major elements in this composition: the jagged rock, the waves, the fisherman, and Mount Fuji in the distance. By limiting the number of elements in his design, Hokusai creates a composition that focuses the viewer's attention but has interesting movement and texture in the waves.

Can you see where Hokusai has repeated similar angles and forms?

The slope of the rock is mirrored in the angles of the waves, the mountain, and the curve of the fisherman's back. The slope of the right side of Fuji is echoed in the fisherman's net line and the little boy sitting down.

How is Mount Fuji presented here? How is it similar or different from the previous slide?

Mount Fuji is shown in outline form with little detail. Unlike the previous print where the mountain looks small compared to the huge wave, the famous volcano is shown rising out of a thick foggy mist. There is a different mood about the mountain than in the previous print; Fuji appears powerful and somewhat mysterious.

What is the relationship between humans and nature?

In this scene, a fisherman strains to cast his net and keep his balance on the rock. Strong waves crash below him. His young son tends to the fish

basket quietly. The sea provides food for the fisherman but is also a powerful, dynamic force with which to contend.

Discussion

This print was made using a new blue dye from Germany called Prussian blue. This new, expensive pigment was applied in varying degrees to give the illusion of depth on Japanese paper. How would using one color help the simplicity of a design?

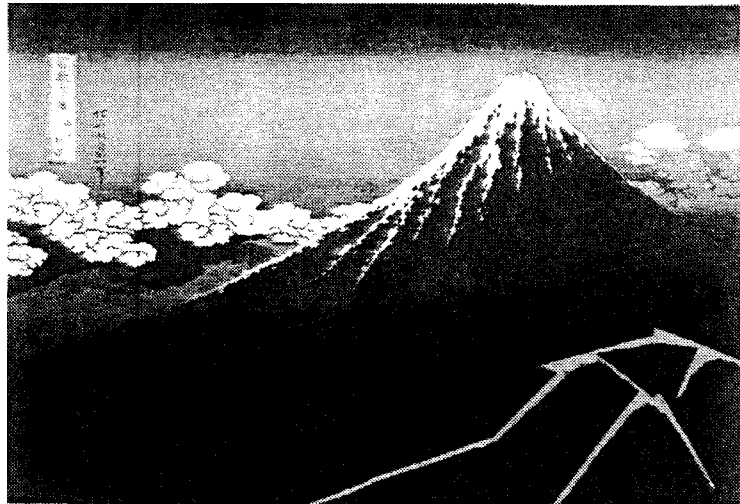
SLIDE 14

"Thunderstorm Beneath the Summit"

Series: *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*

Hokusai, approx. 1830

Acquisition #HAA 15928



What image does Mount Fuji project in this print?

Mount Fuji is seen as a dark mountain engulfed in clouds. There is a feeling of drama and impending danger. You can see the thunder flashing in a zigzag pattern at the foot of the mountain. The use of red in this print gives one a sense that Mount Fuji is a volcano capable of great destruction. Hokusai communicates the feelings of admiration, awe, and fear the Japanese felt towards this mountain.

How does Hokusai create a dramatic feeling?

He uses dense red and black for the mountain, which stand out against the light blue, green, and white background. In such a way, Mount Fuji looks very imposing. Hokusai also uses angled shapes at the base of the mountain that give a feeling of tension and anxiety. These contrast with the white, curly clouds in the sky above.

How does this print exemplify Japanese design aesthetics?

This print illustrates common aspects of Japanese design: an asymmetrical composition; solid planes of color to denote depth; bold, simple shapes; and repetitive, decorative, swirling lines to denote the clouds.

Discussion

If Hokusai wanted to create a lighter, gentler mood in this print, how do you think he would have changed the color scheme, details, and composition? Which of Hokusai's portrayals of Mount Fuji do you prefer? Why?

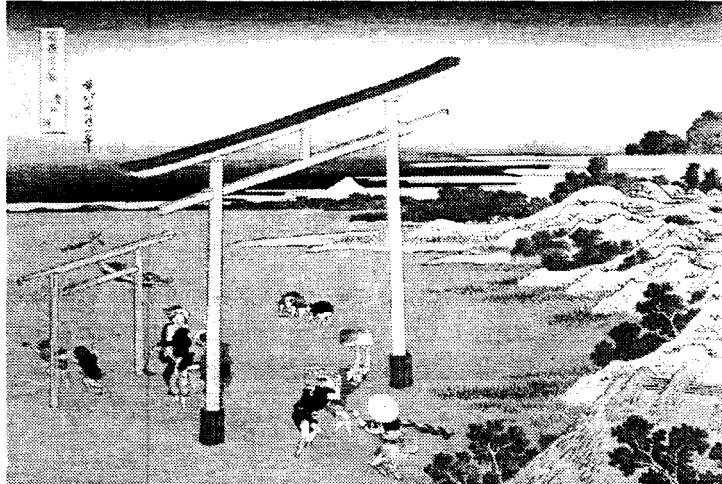
SLIDE 15

"The Bay of Noboto in Shimosa Province"

Series: *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*

Hokusai, approx. 1830

Acquisition #HAA 21946



What are people doing in this scene?

The people are gathering clams at low tide at the beach in Noboto, a small fishing village outside Edo. The beach had shallow water that was ideal for clam digging. In this scene, two men walk towards the beach, carrying their catch in baskets. A woman and man stand further in the water, possibly wondering if they have chosen the right spot to dig. Two children chase each other in play while the adults work.

What do you think the two structures in the water are?

These two structures are *torii*, which are gateways to the entrance of a Shinto shrine. In Noboto, there was a small Shinto shrine on the hill above the beach. These two *torii* most likely belonged to it.

What is the Shinto religion?

Shinto means "the way of the gods," and is the native religion of Japan. This religion is based on the worship of gods in nature, in which every natural object has a spirit called a *kami*. Whether living or dead, everything in nature, such as a flower, rock, tree, river, person, or mountain, has a spirit and therefore must be respected. Exceptionally beautiful elements of nature, such as a waterfall, mountain (like Fuji), or even an ancient tree are often designated as sacred Shinto pilgrimage sites. They are often marked by a *torii* gate or a huge rope hung across the entrance.

How did Shinto affect how the Japanese viewed nature?

The Japanese have always had great respect for nature. Since ancient times, classical Japanese literature, poetry, and paintings extolled beautiful

landscapes or famous places in nature. People made religious pilgrimages to these sites, a major reason for travel during the Edo period.

Hokusai and Hiroshige are best known for their landscape prints. Before them, landscapes were a minor subject in *ukiyo-e* and were mainly used to provide backgrounds. Hokusai and Hiroshige, however, made landscapes the focal point of their works and perfected this genre.

Discussion

- Where is Fuji in this print? Why do you think Hokusai placed it there? Notice how the curve of the *torii* beams follow the slope of Fuji in the distance, as well as the curve of the rocks on the beach. How does it affect the focus of the viewer?
- How is sacred space demarcated in the United States? Are gates, symbols, ropes, or writing used? Why do you think the Japanese use gates to symbolize sacred Shinto spaces?

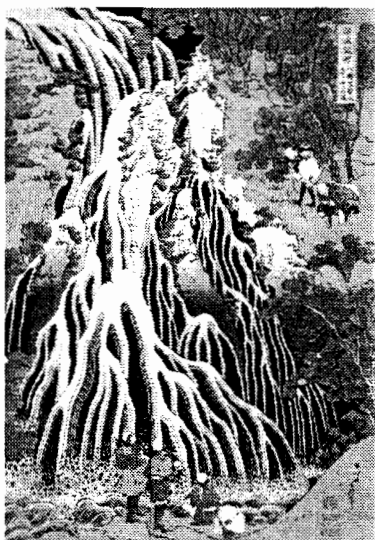
SLIDE 16

"Kirifuri Waterfall on Mount Kurokami in Shimotsuke Province"

Series: *A Tour of Japanese Waterfalls*

Hokusai, approx. 1830

Acquisition #HAA 16794



This print is part of a series of eight prints called *A Tour of Japanese Waterfalls*, depicting famous waterfalls in Japan. Many of the pictures show pilgrims in a variety of activities, such as having a picnic, hiking up the waterfalls, or washing themselves in the waters. This print is an example of *meisho-e*, which means "pictures of famous places."

How does the waterfall appear to you--weak, powerful, gentle, wild?

The Kirifuri Waterfall shown here looks very powerful, as its waters cascade in strong torrents down the mountain. Hokusai depicts the flow of water in a very stylized pattern, making it look like tree roots. In some ways, the waterfall resembles a living creature that is constantly moving and branching in all directions.

How are people enjoying the waterfall?

Three men gaze up in awe at Kirifuri. As they admire the falls, the chilling mist of water sprays the men in the faces. Above, two travelers hike up the slippery, steep mountain to find the origin of the falls.

What is the relationship between humans and nature?

The immense scale and power of the waterfall dwarf the human figures. They look vulnerable to its power. In this print, Hokusai manages to show the strength of the water, as well as its incredible beauty.

What type of *ukiyo-e* does this print exemplify?

This print exemplifies *meisho-e*, which were collected by travelers as souvenirs or reminders of places they would someday visit. Most Japanese during the Edo period lived their entire lives in one village or city. As a result, such prints provided the average person with romantic visions of nature, landscapes, and exotic places.

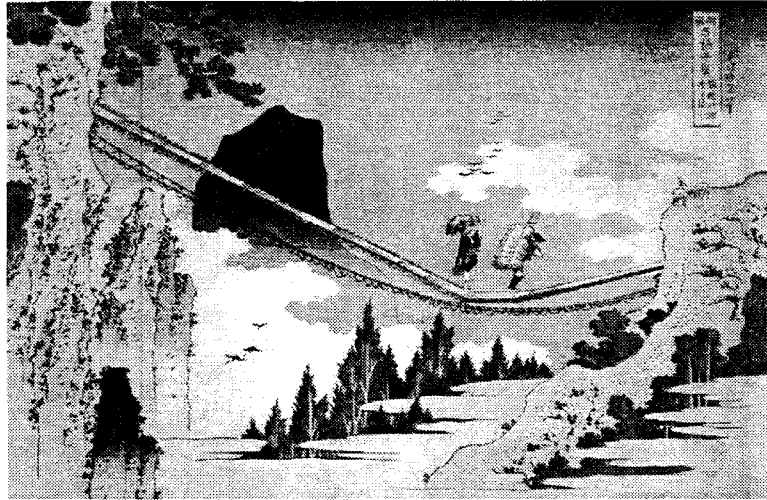
SLIDE 17

"Suspension Bridge Between Hida and Etchu"

Series: Rare Views of Famous Bridges in All the Provinces

Hokusai, approx. 1830

Acquisition #HAA 20081



This picture depicts an imaginary suspension bridge between two mountains. What mood do you think Hokusai was trying to create?

Hokusai creates a sense of danger in this scene. Two farmers carefully cross a bamboo bridge with their heavy goods. The bridge bows under their weight, showing how lightweight and fragile it is. As we see the treetops peeking through the mist, we realize how elevated and precarious the bridge is.

Besides feeling some danger, one might also feel a sense of compassion for the two farmers. We realize the hardships of their journey as well as their perseverance in the face of danger.

How does Hokusai focus our attention on the human figures?

Elements surrounding the figures are simplified to outlines, with just enough detail to show the danger and precariousness of the situation. Hokusai also lowers the horizon line of this composition to isolate the two figures against the blue sky and focus our attention on them.

In designing *meisho-e*, was it more important for the artist to represent the place realistically or figuratively?

For *ukiyo-e* artists, what was most important in *meisho-e* was expressing the spirit or mood of a place. Japanese artists were less concerned with depicting a place realistically, as a modern-day postcard might. Rather, they wanted to convey a certain emotion, thought, or meaning that was associated with the place. In this case, what kinds of emotions did Hokusai capture?

Discussion

How do painters, print designers, and photographers differ in their media? How can each use lighting, composition, colors, treatment of figures, etc. in different ways to make a particular statement about their subject matter? Why would they do this? Can you find examples in magazines, advertisements, books, newspapers, or television to illustrate your point?

SLIDE 18

"Grounds of the Kameido Tenjin Shrine" (View 65)

Series: *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*

Hiroshige, approx. 1857

Acquisition #HAA 22750



This print depicts a major Shinto shrine in Edo, which was built in honor of a great scholar, poet, calligrapher, and statesman of the early Heian period (795-1185), Sugawara no Michizane (845-903). Michizane eventually became known as the patron saint of calligraphy and learning in Japan.

What elements of nature do you see in this print?

You can see the spectacular garden that surrounds the shrine. As you overlook the pond, wisteria branches sway before you. People stroll leisurely across an arched bridge that was connected to the shrine. In the distance, people gaze over the pond.

What kinds of activities would happen at a shrine?

Shrines were not just used for religious purposes. In Edo, there were very few large spaces open to the public. Because the gardens and land surrounding shrines were expansive, they were often used for rituals and seasonal festivals (such as the Cherry Blossom Festival). Sumo wrestling, theater performances, displays of exotic animals, and drinking and eating would take place at these celebrations.

Why might you feel as if you're standing in this scene?

Hiroshige places a vertical pole in the foreground, which makes the viewer feel as if they were standing underneath a wisteria arch. This use of a large foreground object to the side of the composition was often used by Japanese artists to frame the composition, and separate the foreground from the background.

Discussion

- If fewer colors had been used, how would the picture look? What if Hiroshige had chosen different colors besides blues, reds, and greens? How would that change the mood?
- The Japanese celebrate seasonal changes with special festivals. Besides cherry-blossom viewing, maple leaf viewing in the fall has been especially popular since ancient times. How do people in your community recognize the different seasons?

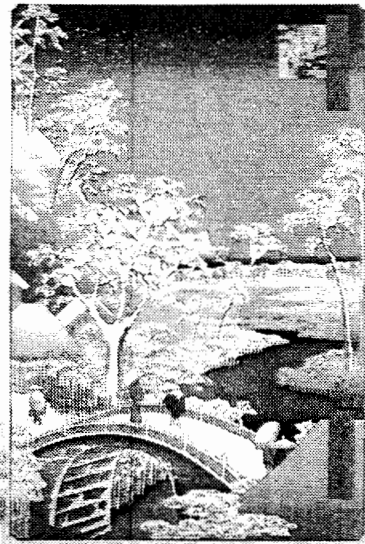
SLIDE 19

"Drum Bridge and Sunset Hill, Meguro" (View 111)

Series: *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*

Hiroshige, approx. 1857

Acquisition #HAA 22807



How does the mood of this *meisho-e* differ from the one before?

This has a quieter, more subdued feeling. The snowfall, which might have started early in the morning, densely covers the bridge, riverbanks, hills, trees, and rooftops. People quietly move about as snow coats their garments. In Hiroshige's time, the area near this scene was part of a *daimyo's* estate in Edo.

How does the way in which woodblock prints were cut add to the effect of snow on the landscape?

In woodblock printing, the look of snow was created by not applying color to certain areas and leaving the paper bare. The blockcutter filled in those areas with details of tree branches, grasses, etc. The effect of filling in the white areas with minimal detail creates a look of lighter, fluffier snow on the trees, ground, and bridge. How does this compare to the snow in Hiroshige's "Night Snow at Kambara"?

What kind of sounds can you imagine hearing in this winter landscape?

Discussion

Although this print belonged to the series entitled *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo*, a total of 118 prints were produced. Because the series was so popular, the publisher commissioned Hiroshige and his students to create more prints. *Ukiyo-e* was a market-driven art form that was influenced in subject matter and style by public demand. How does the influence of mass culture on Edo period art compare to art that is produced now? To what extent is today's art driven by public demand?

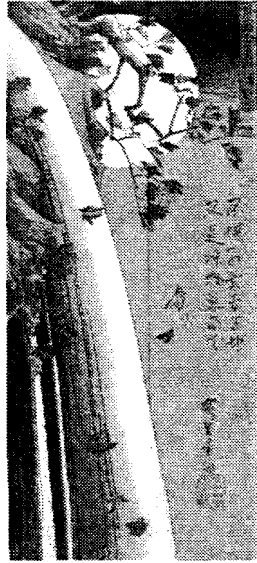
SLIDE 20

"The Moon Seen Through Maple Leaves"

Series: *Twenty-eight Views of the Moon*

Hiroshige, approx. 1832

Acquisition #HAA 22306



Notice the calligraphy written vertically along the side of the waterfall. What might this be--the print's title, a famous quote, the artist's signature?

It is a famous poem written by a Chinese poet of the Tang dynasty, Hakurakuten (772-846). The poem translates as:

It is not unbearable to see maple leaves fall,
scattering on the
moss-covered ground.

It is so sad to feel the wind grow chilly
and see the whole sky darkening.

In some *ukiyo-e* prints, well-known poetry was combined with beautiful landscapes to enhance the

overall effect the publisher and artist wished to convey. How does the style of the calligraphy mimic the fall of water?

Do you think this is an actual site that Hiroshige visited?

No specific sites are referenced in this design. It most likely was an imaginary place that Hiroshige based on the poem.

Ukiyo-e prints showed not only the everyday lives of common people, but also expressed the impermanent and transitory nature of life. How does this print express this idea?

In this scene, we see a maple tree barely clinging to the cliff above a waterfall. A gust of wind shakes the tree and causes its leaves to flutter into the water. Combined with the poem, the print evokes a melancholy, lonely feeling in which the maples leaves, moon, sky, and water are constantly changing from one state to another. The scene is somewhat dreamlike and fantastical.

Extension Activity

- What is this poem trying to say? What natural elements not mentioned in the poem are included in the print (i.e. waterfall, moon)? How do they change or add to the meaning of the poem? Would you have interpreted the poem differently without Hiroshige's picture?
- What kind of poem would you have combined with this print? Write one that expresses the mood and message you wish to convey. Is the mood and message different from that of the Chinese poem?